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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Indigenous Human Rights Defenders in serious danger

Globally, indigenous Human Rights Defenders are under growing threat of violence and violation of human rights. Tensions are especially high in Latin America and Asia. Indigenous peoples are under pressure of government institutions, i.e. regular armed forces, as well as non-governmental players (militia, gold prospectors, oil-, gas- and extractive industries, drug trafficking, illegal logging). Particularly bad is the situation in Brazil, the Philippines, Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay and the Russian Federation. As well, indigenous peoples are under attack in Myanmar, India, Mexico and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) insists on an effective protection of indigenous peoples' human rights defenders worldwide.

Indigenous human rights activists are victims of the full scale of repression from expulsion to extermination. In Guatemala 496 indigenous human rights' defenders and farmer were murdered in 2017 alone. Violence continued in 2018 with seven murdered indigenous human rights activists between beginning of May and end of July. Most of the victims were active members of the rural indigenous organizations CODECA (Comité de Desarrollo Campesino) and CCDA (Comité Campesino del Altiplano). The young nurse Juana Raymundo (25) for example died on July 28, 2018, when she did not return home from work. The body of the Ixil-Maya woman showed signs of torture.

In Colombia the peace-agreement between the government and the FARC guerrilla did not bring peace for the indigenous peoples and the Afro-Colombians, whose territory remains to be bone of contention for landlords, drug traffickers, illegal loggers and legal as well as illegal armed militia. All of them question the land rights of the indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombian communities and they are using violence to bring it under their own control. According to the president of the Organización Nacional Indigena de Colombia ONIC, Higinio Obispo, Indigenous rights are violated systematically and continuously more and more brutal. Impunity is a rule. ELN and other new guerrillas are fighting with other militia to gain control in the regions of former FARC control. Therefore, in the western Chocó six indigenous and twelve afro-colombian communities are not able to return to their self-sufficient livelyhood with big companies striving for control over their territory to use it for cattle ranches or for plantation with oil palms or bananas. According to a report of Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 123 human rights defenders lost their lives during the first six month of 2018, among them 22 indigenous leaders and 8 Afro-Colombians. Fifteen percent of all victims were female. Therefore, Colombia remains to be the country with the biggest number of internally displaced persons. According to UNHCR, they amount to 7.7 million.

In Paraguay, drug trafficking and illegal logging threaten the indigenous peoples in the areas bordering Brazil and Peru. Globally, Paraguay is one of the leading producers of Marihuana. Cartels from Brazil, namely First Capital Command (PCC) and Red Command, are fighting for the supremacy in the Paraguayan rainforest, each supported by clans from Paraguay who are under the umbrella of corrupt Paraguayan politicians, judges and security staff. They threaten the survival of indigenous and non-indigenous communities living in the same areas in the rainforest. Increasingly they tend to substitute their traditional crops (manioc, corn and sesame) with Marihuana. Critics of the cartels are intimidated and sometimes even risk their lives.

In Myanmar, despite the official ceasefire the Karen land rights activist O Moo died on 5 April 2018. His crime: he gave a ride to one of the leading figures of the armed Karen National Defense Organisation (KNDO) on his moped. Regular troops of the Burmese army shot at them mistaking them as saboteurs. In Myanmar, the military normally does not make any differences between armed resistance fighters and civilians. The Karen are in opposition to dams on the Salween River threatening their livelihood as fishermen.

In the Philippines, members of the 18 Lumad indigenous peoples are under attack every single day. In their territory on Mindanao they stand between the lines of Muslim rebels fighting for self-determination in the area under catholic domination and regular troops. Mindanao is rich on resources and farmland. Civilians are severely under pressure. In 2017, president Duterte threatened the Lumad with bombing their schools to destroy the rebels. In fact, during 2017/18 at least one indigenous school was under attack every day. Quite often troops occupy schools as headquarters intimidating the students. There they torture displaced persons and intimidate and threaten the teachers. On 3 December 2017, unknown armed persons killed nine Lumad in Sitio Datal Bonlangon in South Cotabato district. The Duterte government even declared United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz an undesirable person because of her critical position regarding human rights in the Philippines. Mrs. Tauli-Corpuz is from the Philippines herself.

In Russia, governmental institutions criminalize indigenous human rights activists in order to silence them or to drive them into exile. The Chakass indigenous woman Lydia Bainova from Abakan is facing legal proceedings because of her

engagement for the survival of the traditional language, manners and customs of her people. The FSB accused her as an extremist creating hatred between the different ethnic groups. Human rights activist Yana Tannagasheva of the Shorts indigenous community is very critical to coalmining in the territory of her people. After many attempts to threaten her and her family and to silence her voice, she finally decided to leave Russia and went abroad with her family.

Society for Threatened Peoples urgently calls on the UN Human Rights Council to create an effective mechanism for the protection of indigenous human rights defenders by making any arrangements necessary for the adoption of an *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Human Rights Defenders*.